

A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D to the

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

A T

S A L T E R S H A L L,

J U N E 28, 1736.

By S A M U E L S A Y.

Publish'd at their REQUEST.



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Reformation of Manners

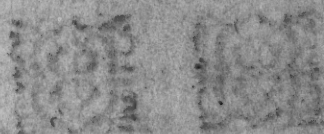
AT

SALTHERS HALL

JUNE 28, 1786.

BY SAMUEL SAY.

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.



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ISAIAH XLIX. 4.

Then I said, I have laboured in vain; I have spent my Strength for nought, and in vain: Yet surely my Judgment is with the Lord, and my Work [or Reward is] with my God.

ON any other Occasion than the present, I should think it proper, perhaps, before I proceeded any farther, to ask the Question here, *Of whom speaketh the Prophet this? Of himself, or of some other Man?* And should believe I had right to *preach to you Jesus* from these Words.

But I perswade my self you all expect that I should enter at once on the Design of this Day; and to the Purpose of such a Design, we are very little concern'd, whether *Isaiah* speaks here in his own Person, or in the Person of him, whose Character and Office he sustain'd in a Figure.

4 *A Sermon to the Societies*

Whoever he was, you will see by a View of the Verse that precedes, and of that which follows my Text, that he was the *Servant* of God in a very peculiar and emphatical Sense, *Call'd, and form'd from the very Womb of his Mother*, to the most important Work; the most Glorious to God, and the most Salutary to Men. In other Words, to be a *Prince* that should have *Power with God and with Man, and that should prevail with either*. Therefore the Divine Voice addresseth it self to him under a Name the most proper, to assure him of all this, and said, *Thou art my Servant, O ISRAEL, in whom I will be glorified.*

He hears the Witness from Heaven —
But what is his Answer?

Such as suited, indeed, the present melancholy Appearance of Things; but at the same Time such as became the Faith of so glorious an Instrument in the Hands of God, and of one who was born, and ordained to the noblest Purposes, by a Wisdom and Power that could never be defeated; and who was call'd to a Service which shall neither be without Effect, or without Reward.

His Answer therefore represents at once, his Discouragements and his Faith; the Complaints he makes, and his Supports under them. And,

First,

for Reformation of Manners. 5

First, His Complaints, Then I said, I have laboured in vain; I have spent my Strength for nought, and in vain.

If we should suppose, that these Words express the Discouragements the Prophet himself was under, as a lively Figure of *him who was to come*, it must be own'd he had but too much Reason, if you compare together two Passages; the one in the Beginning, the other almost at the Close of his Ministry. He had been sent to recover a stupid and ungrateful Generation to a Sense of their Interest and Duty; *a sinful Nation*, as they are call'd, *a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil Doers; corrupt themselves*, and in a Disposition to corrupt others; *that had forsaken the Lord, and provoked the holy One of Israel*; as you read in the very first Chapter. He may seem to complain therefore, how vainly he had labour'd among them, and attempted to recover a People sunk into the lowest Dregs of Vice; and adding Rebellion to Profaneness and Immorality. Therefore, as the ^a Apostle takes Notice, to the very same *Israel* he saith, in the 65th Chapter, *ver. 2. All the Day long have I stretched forth my Hands to a disobedient and gainsaying People.* And this, after engaging in the Work of Reformation for more than half

^a Rom. x. 21.

6 *A Sermon to the Societies*

an Age among them ; and through the Reign of four successive Kings, the Character of some of whom will not suffer us to question, whether the Prophet had been supported and countenanced by them in this necessary Work. With reason therefore does God himself command their Impiety and Incurribleness to stand upon Record to all Generations ; *Chap. xxx. 8. Go, says he, write it before them, and note it in a Book, that it may be for the Time to come, for ever and ever, that this is a rebellious People.*

And if we enquire into the Success of a still greater Prophet, and *whom last of all the Father sent unto the World* ; I need not tell you ; himself insinuates how it would be, in a remarkable Parable, *Matt. xxi. 38—41.* And every one knows the Character of *that sinful and adulterous Generation.* Let it suffice to observe, that *Israelites was not gather'd*, by the Concession of the Verse that follows my Text, and by the pathetic Expostulation of Jesus, *How often would I have gather'd thee, saith he, and thou wouldst not ? Luke xiii. 34.* And this, after he had spoken to them, by their own Confession, *as never Man spake, and done the Works which never Man did.*

From whence we have just Reason, to observe, if the Time would allow us, to enlarge on such an Observation, that

for Reformation of Manners. 7

'Tis possible for the most excellent of the Servants of God; design'd and concern'd for the Good of their Fellow-Creatures, to exert themselves to the utmost of their Power in the Service of God, and of Mankind; and yet think themselves to have cause to complain, that there has been little, or even no Success, of all their Labours.

Then I said, I have labour'd in vain, and spent my Strength for nought, or in vain. But,

Secondly, 'Tis much more, I imagine, to our present Purpose, to turn our Eyes to the Expressions of his Faith under such Discouragements, and to the powerful Considerations, by which this great Servant of God supported himself.

Then I said, I have labour'd in vain; I have spent my Strength for nought, and in vain; yet, surely, my Judgment is with the Lord, and my Work, or Reward, is with my God. That is,

It is impossible it should be utterly in vain; infinite Wisdom and Goodness will never act in this manner. There shall be Effects worthy the Solemnity, with which I was form'd from the Womb, and design'd for such Service; at least worthy all the Diligence and Zeal with which I have labour'd in it. And if it be ever so much in
vain

8 *A Sermon to the Societies*

vain to others, it shall never be in vain to my self; *My Judgment is with the Lord, and my Work with my God.* The Recovery of Mankind from the Error of their Ways, and the Restoring of them to their God, and to the original Dignity of their Nature, is an Attempt upon which God will look down from Heaven with Approbation, and which shall never lose its Reward.

Here I may safely leave it, and be concern'd alone to perform my Part, and to have the Judgment of God himself another Day, that I have engaged in it with the utmost Faithfulness and Resolution.

This therefore is another Observation we have right to make on the Reading of these Words.

That all those who engage with Zeal and Fidelity in any great and generous Undertaking, for the Honour of God; and the Good of their Fellow-Creatures, have reason to support themselves under all their Discouragements, by the comfortable Consideration, that how little soever they see of the Effect intended or desir'd by them, yet it is impossible their Labour should be utterly in vain.

It shall appear one Day, to have been infinitely worth their while, to have engag'd

for Reformation of Manners. 9

gag'd all the Forces of their Souls in this Work.

But I never intended to stay on the general Instructions we may learn from these Words. I hasten to apply them to the present Occasion; and to address my self in the View and Faith of such Truths, to you, Gentlemen, of the SOCIETIES for REFORMATION of MANNERS.

I pretend to give you no Directions in a Work, which, I am persuaded, you understand much better than my self; I would only encourage you to persevere as you have begun; would strengthen your Hands, and confirm your Hearts, and put you in mind, that thus doing, your *Labour shall not be in vain.*

In order to which I shall first shew,

I. That you are engaged in a Work that deserves all your Labour, and the exerting of your selves to the utmost of your Power.

II. Shall allow, that you meet with Discouragements in it, and that the Effect may not seem to have been equal either to your Endeavours or your Expectations. And,

B

III.

10 *A Sermon to the Societies*

III. Shall set before you the Right you have, with all other the faithful Servants of God, to the Supports which are mentioned in the Text, or any other, which the very Reason of the Thing may suggest to you under such Discouragements. And,

I. I shall endeavour to shew, that in an Attempt for Reformation of Manners in the present degenerate Age, you are engag'd in a Work that *deserves* all your Labour: A Work of the last Necessity and Importance; equally for the Glory of God, and the Advantage of your Fellow-Creatures, and Fellow-Subjects.

There are those, indeed, who call this in Question; but surely under the present and general Corruption of Manners among us, and the dreadful Consequences of it, which we see, or hear of, every Day, it must be right that some Check should be given to so great and growing an Evil; that wholesome Laws should be executed; and that they who are willing to put them in Execution, or are bound by Office, and even by Oath, to do it, should be supported and encourag'd; and they who not only arraign the Conduct, but even condemn the very Being of such Societies [for Reformation of Manners] ought to point out to us some more effectual Method, and substitute

for Reformation of Manners. 11

stitute some other Remedy that may be equal to the Disease. But as to the Attempt it self, I cannot but think we ought to look upon it as the most important in which we can possibly engage.

The Reason of the Thing; the Sense of Mankind; the Judgment of infinite Wisdom; and even, the Conduct of infinite Goodness and Love to the human Race, concur together to convince me of it. And,

First, The Reason of the Thing. There is an utter, eternal, and even infinite Inconsistence between Wickedness and Happiness. Sin is not only the *Reproach*, but the *Misery of any People*. The farther they are sunk into Immorality, the more they are lost, not only to God but to themselves, and under a manifest Indisposition, and Incapacity for all the nobler Purposes of human Life, as well as for all the sweetest and highest Enjoyments of a rational Nature. All the Designs that require Attention and Diligence; the Possession of a Man's self; the very Use of his Reason; and especially, the exerting all the Forces of his Soul upon any great or important Occasion, either for himself, or his Fellow-Creatures; none of these are ever to be hop'd, or not to the Degree that might otherwise be expected, from a Man who is under the Power of every foolish Lust, and

12 *A Sermon to the Societies*

vile Affection, that hurries him away in the Pursuit of present Pleasure, or commands him off from every wise and generous Undertaking, to the Indulgence of his vitious Inclinations, whatever be the Consequence to himself, to those that are dearest to him, or even to all Mankind, as the Case may sometimes be, in all Ages, and all Generations.

What a prodigious Difference then will there be, in the happy, or the miserable Circumstances of any People, where general Virtue, or a general Dissolution of Manners prevails; that is, where every one is employed in various Arts and Occupations to relieve the Misery, or add to the Comforts and Ornaments of Life; and each in a Disposition to do Service to all the rest; or on the contrary, in a Disposition to serve himself upon the Ruin and Misery of all about him; or cares not, at least, what becomes of the whole World, so himself may enjoy the silly, the senseless, the brutish Pleasure of the present Moment of Lust or Folly.

Secondly, As the Reason of the Thing, so also the general Sense of Mankind, of all Ages and Nations, some few, perhaps, of our own Age and Nation excepted, may strengthen the Conviction, that you are engag'd in a Cause that deserves all your Sollicitude and Attention.

The

for Reformation of Manners. 13

The *Romans*, particularly, who made the Best, and the greatest Figure, and for the longest Time of any Nation in the Earth, of which we have any certain Account, ascribe the Greatness and Felicity of their Republick, to the Piety, the Magnanimity, the Justice, the Temperance, and Moderation of their Ancestors; and constantly affirm, that their Empire declin'd and sunk together with their Manners. These are the Sentiments, which, not only their Poets, but their wise Men, their Orators, and grave Historians, are perpetually inculcating upon their Readers; and they will never allow, that it is possible, for a People of profligate Manners, to be either a great or a happy People: Where there is nothing with them any longer, either profane or sacred; no sense of Religion, or love of Virtue; and where the Lusts of Men are let loose upon one another; where the Dregs of the People are abandon'd to every licentious Practice; and the Minds of the Rich, and the Great, that ought to be intent upon the Service of the Publick, are for ever engag'd in the Pursuit of endless Pleasures and Amusements, and where, as even a Disciple of *Epicurus* complains [all the *Bene parta Patrum*] the Estates acquir'd by the Virtue and Industry of their Fathers are consum'd

14 *A Sermon to the Societies*

sum'd by the Follies and Extravagancies of their Children.

They could never esteem it an Instance of the general Felicity, that the vast Treasures amass'd, if we must so call it, by some single Person, but as the natural Consequence of great Diligence, Integrity, and Success in Business, come now by the Madness of the next that succeeds him, to circulate indeed into the Hands of Thousands, who, as useless Vermin upon rotting Carcases, live upon the Follies and Excesses of one, without addition of the least Farthing to the Riches of the Community. On the contrary, they would have regarded them rather as derived only from the Right into an improper Channel; and as taken out of the Hands of ten Thousand more, perhaps, who were employ'd and exercised in various and useful Occupations, under the wise Direction of one; and who all, though in an inferior degree, grew rich and happier together with him; and by the same Addition to the Public, that was made to the Wealth of each private Person.

For where general Luxury has introduced general Poverty; and Pleasure, and Dress, and Equipage, have tempted every Individual to live beyond the Supplies that any ordinary Circumstances can be
sup-

for Reformation of Manners. 15

suppos'd to bring in; and the *Decencies*, as we have learn'd to call the *Extravagancies* of Life, have left nothing, I do not say, for the Uses of Piety, Friendship, or Charity, but even for the very *Necessities* of Life, as appears by the Misery of many Families at home, who make a very grand and shining Figure abroad: What is likely to ensue at the End of these Things, but general Depredations, by all Sorts of Persons, upon one another? Rapine, Extortion, Bribes, Perjury, and Subornation; clandestine Attempts, and open Assaults; till not the Roads alone, but *the Streets* also of every City, are fill'd with Violence. Which puts me in mind of the dreadful, and then, perhaps, unexpected Change, that has arriv'd in this very City since the Reformation Sermon that was preach'd to these Societies in November, 1697. by an excellent Person long ago deceas'd, and who had travell'd Abroad in his younger Days. " 'Tis certainly, *saieth he*, for the
" Honour of *London*, which is one of the
" most considerable Cities in the World,
" that base Assassinations, Murders and
" Robberies, are not so common here, as
" in many Cities of *Spain* and *Italy*, [*Two of those three Nations, that, according to Machiavel, corrupt all the rest of the World*]
" That a Man, as he goes on, may walk
" safely, upon a lawful Occasion, at any
" Time

16 *A Sermon to the Societies*

“ Time of the Night, from one end of the
 “ City to the other, without hazard of his
 “ Life.” May we venture to do the same
 now? And do we find, indeed, that *private Vices are the public Felicity?* And
 shall no stop be attempted to be put to
 such Disorders?

’Tis true, indeed, that the most necessary Reformation may sometimes be almost equally dangerous with the Vices themselves, which are attempted to be reformed; and that a Society may be reduc’d to such Circumstances as the same *Romans* are represented to be in, at the Decline of their Empire, when they were *neither able to bear their own Vices, nor the Remedy of them*; as we our selves have lately felt in a very remarkable Instance. And ’tis a received Maxim in Government, that in a very corrupt State of any Commonwealth, an Attempt for Reformation is not without extreme Danger.

*Non absq; discrimine Mores Civitatis corruptæ
 Ad meliorem frugem revocantur.*

If therefore we believe our selves not yet arrived at the worst, but still under the strongest Tendency to it, ’tis Time the strongest Opposition should be made to it, before the Disease be grown altogether desperate and incurable; for when once it comes

for Reformation of Manners. 17

comes to a general and utter Corruption of Manners, and Men have fill'd up the Measure of their Sins, there remains no other Remedy in such a Case, but that in pity to Ages to come, and to the human Species upon the Whole, such a Race be swept off the Stage, and give way to a Succession of Men, such as the Divine Providence, and the Imprudence, or Infatuation rather, of the present *European* Powers, seem to be preparing once more in the North; whose Ignorance or Poverty, their Climate, or manner of Life and Government, has less expos'd to the Vices of Nations soften'd by Pleasure, dissolv'd by Luxury, or broken by Diseases, that are the natural Effects of Vice, when it comes to be extreme and universal [among any People.] And therefore in the third and last Place I may add, that as the Reason of the Thing, and the general Sense of the wisest of all Nations assure us, that the Design in which you are engaged deserves all your Care; so also does,

Thirdly, The Judgment of the supreme Reason. I shall not now appeal to the Testimony of the sacred Writings, in which Virtue is always represented under the Notion of Wisdom, and Vice of Folly, but to the constant Method and Procedure of infinite Wisdom and *Justice*, shall I say? Or rather of infinite *Goodness*, in the

18 *A Sermon to the Societies*

Judgments it has executed on whole Ages, or whole Nations of Sinners, in mercy to all the rest? *In mercy*, I say; for I have been long mistaken, if all the Methods of Providence, which are wont to appear to us with the Air of utmost, and awful Severity, and to which our Minds are the most difficultly reconcil'd, are not, indeed, the Demonstration of the Goodness, rather than of the Severity of God; or Severity, the whole Intention of which was Goodness.

But I have too much to say on this Head to say any Thing at all here. I will only add therefore, before I proceed to the second Part of my Discourse, that

I am persuaded, Gentlemen, all the Severity with which you have been oblig'd to act has proceeded from the same God-like Benevolence and Love to your Fellow-Creatures; either to the very Persons of those who suffer, or to the many Thousand unwary Souls among whom they are spreading the most dangerous Infection.

You have just Notions of the contagious Influence of bad Examples; and, in imitation of infinite Goodness, would inflict Punishment on a Few in kindness to all; and choose to do this with Judgment and Propriety, and in the Manner that shall best discover the Tenderness and Charity,
as

for Reformation of Manners. 19

as well as the Zeal and Resolution, with which you engage in this necessary Work.

And as I look upon it as the Glory of this Nation, and particularly of this great City, to have set the first Example of such an Attempt for Reformation to other Cities, and even to other Nations, so it is particularly to the Honour of Protestants, that wherein they are plainly agreed, all Denominations among us have resolved to walk by the same Rule, and serve the Cause of their common Lord, believing *all good Men to be of one Religion, and all bad Men, of whatever Party or Profession, of none.*

In this Spirit you glory to act, and in this Union you are terrible as an Army with Banners to the common Adversary of all sincere Christians; and to this you owe a great Part of the Success you have enjoy'd.

The Success; alas! some of you may be ready to reply, perhaps, we have little to boast of here; we have too much cause to say, in the Language of the Text, *Surely, we have laboured in vain.*

II. Nor, to go on to the second great Division of my Discourse, do I intend by such an Expression to deny the Discouragements you are under; some, and the justest of which, it may not be proper for

20 *A Sermon to the Societies*

me to mention, but which I must allow you to feel: And upon these, and many other Accounts, must acknowledge it is not without cause that you may be ready to think you have exerted your selves so many Years to little Purpose, when you consider only the present State of Things among us.

I am very sensible, that Complaints which have been equally made in all Ages, must in some Ages have been very unjust and groundless. But it does not follow from hence, that there are not Times of remarkable Degeneracy and Corruption of Manners; nor that there are not some Seasons more favourable to Piety and Virtue than others. Can you not remember, many of you, the Times and the Places where you might have walked the length of whole Streets, and even of whole Towns and Cities, and your Ears not have been once pain'd with hearing the *Voice of Swearing*, or violated with Curses and Imprecations; where you should not have met with one Person reeling or wallowing in the Street, or dead drunk upon the Ground, or at our Doors, as now.

Can you not remember also, when publick Houses have refused to admit you in on the Sabbath-day, though you urged that you wanted Refreshment? Have not your own Ears heard them beg you to sit down

for Reformation of Manners. 21

down abroad, and accept it, without danger to them?

The Time also, and the Place, may be remember'd, when in one of the great Roads from hence, a petty Constable dar'd to [reverence the Oath that he had taken, and to] demand of the greatest that presum'd to travel the Road at such a Time, the Licence they had to do it. And when, not Journies for Business, and much less Rides for Pleasure, or even Races for Prize, by such as ought to have given other Examples, would have been permitted by the lowest of those who had the Power to execute the Laws that guarded that *sacred Day*.

I know that the Sentiments of Protestants themselves are very different as to the Ground and Reason of the Observation of such a Day, as well as the Manner of it. But, methinks, if all other Arguments for such a Practice were dropt, the eternal Reason of Things seems to direct, that *if a Day be kept*, it should be kept in such a Manner as should answer the End; I mean, the Ends of *Religion*; or in the Language of the Apostle, should be kept *to the Lord*. And if it be not, I am tempted to think, it were more a thousand Times for the Interest of Religion and Virtue, that it should never be kept at all; that is, that there should not be a Day distinguish'd from
other

22 *A Sermon to the Societies*

other Days, *for no other Purpose*, than to give the idle and vicious Part of Mankind Leisure and Opportunity for all manner of Excess, and to lay them under the strong and weekly Temptation of expending in Riot and Drunkenness in one Day all that they had earn'd, and that should have supported themselves and their miserable Families by the hard Labour, perhaps, of the six preceding Days.

I dwell the longer on this Head, because not a few of those who break the Laws of the Land every Sabbath, are far from being satisfied that they do not also break the Laws of God; and even some of them, who appear in all other Respects to be very serious, and truly conscientious Persons, at the same Time, that by the general Practice of all about them, and especially those of their own Vocation, they find themselves under a kind of Necessity to submit to the Violence of the Stream, that bears them along together with it; or to renounce their lawful Employments, and the only visible Means of their Subsistence, which they thought no Man was bound to do. How heartily would these Persons rejoice in whatever Power you shall be able to acquire to give Force to such Laws, and thereby deliver them from one of the greatest Snares, and indeed, one of the most dangerous Evils,
the

for Reformation of Manners. 23

the Violation, or straining, at least, of their Consciences. And this Consideration alone may seem to justify a prudent, but zealous Execution of such Laws.

I shall add no more to this long Argument, but only to acknowledge, I believe, that to this very Day, there is a remarkable Difference between the City it self, and the Parts adjacent, and exempted from an Authority that has exerted it self in so honourable a Manner this very Year, with regard to the Observation of the Sabbath; as before in a commendable Opposition to those Nurseries of all Impiety and Dissolution of Manners, the *annual Fairs*, and the *daily Scenes*, the Numbers of which last are so much increased among us within our own Memory.

And here I cannot forbear to say, I believe also, that by whomsoever the Playhouses were frequented in the Days of our Fathers, or even in our own, but few of those who usually frequent these Assemblies were ever willingly seen in those, or even thought of them, without some degree of Horror. Can we say, it is thus with us now? And does not a great part of Life with too many, and valuable Hours, that might be employed to the divinest Purposes, pass away in an endless Succession of Gaieties and Diversions, which were once thought criminal in the very Nature of them,

24 *A Sermon to the Societies*

them, at least in the Manner in which they were manag'd amongst us.

I suppose therefore it may be allow'd, that your Complaints are not altogether without Reason, and that you may be under real and very great Discouragements. And when you look only on the present State, or Appearance of Things, you may be ready to take up the melancholy Words I have read to you, and to fear, that your *Labour has been in vain.*

But then, let me beseech you to carry the Parallel through the whole of such an affecting Passage, and permit me, in the last and closing Part of my Discourse,

III. To suggest to you the many Considerations that may be proper to support and encourage you, and particularly that very powerful one, upon which the Faith of the Prophet here fixes, [*That, surely, your Judgment is with the Lord, and your Work, or Reward, is with your God.*]

And, *First*, The very Complaint it self that is made in my Text, and made by the very Person whom God had distinguish'd in so peculiar a Manner, and emphatically stil'd his Servant, ought rather to give Spirit and Resolution to you to persevere in the Cause in which you are engag'd.

You see by this that you are not alone: The best, and the most excellent of Persons,

for Reformation of Manners. 25

sons, and one greater and more excellent than all mere Men put together, saw Cause to make the very same melancholy Reflections with the rest, upon the little Success of his Endeavours to reform Mankind.

And as to others, the very first that seems to have distinguish'd himself in such a Cause, after he had *walked with God*; that is, had resolv'd to please, or to range himself on the Side of God, in opposition to the early and increasing Impiety and Immorality of the old World, was probably snatch'd away from their impious and injurious Attempts against him, and ascended towards Heaven in the midst of the hard Speeches and Blasphemies of Sinners, whom he endeavoured to reclaim, by denouncing the Judgments of God against them.

And after all the Miracles that *Elijah* had wrought, and his Zeal to restore to the Law of God its due Authority and Influence on the Subjects of it, he is forc'd to *arise and flee for his Life*, and complains, that he had only endanger'd himself, instead of working any Reformation in *Israel*; and for this Reason cries out, *And now, O Lord, take away my Life*; dismiss me, that is, from so vain and fruitless a Service, *For I am not better than my Fathers*.

D

And

26 A Sermon to the Societies

And still more impatient, and even desperate, are the Expressions of *Jeremiah*, after God had made him, as he calls it, a *Man of Contention* with the Age he liv'd in; and he found no other Success than to be made the Object of their daily Derision, *Jer. xv. 10.* and therefore was almost come to a Resolution to desist, and strive against the Stream no longer, *Chap. xx. 8, 9.* You too, in the View of such great Examples, and the Disappointments they met with, may be tempted to say, Are we better than they? Or more likely to succeed, who come after such glorious Instruments of God, that saw so little Fruit of their Labours?

But if we are to follow Examples, it should be in the Diligence and Resolution of those that have gone before us, and in the Zeal which animated all their Endeavours, and compell'd them, as it were, to persist in a Cause of such vast Importance to the Honour of God, and the Good of their Fellow-Creatures. And I have only mention'd the Instance of *Jeremiah*, to point out to you a Heart discourag'd to the last degree, and yet fir'd by a noble and irresistible Zeal for God, to go on: *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his Name: But his Word was in my Heart as a burning Fire shut up: And I was weary with forbearing. I found that it was not possible for me to sup-*

for Reformation of Manners. 27

suppress the holy Flame that was kindled within me.

And what was the Reply that Jesus himself made to those who advis'd him to mean Precautions, and to withdraw from the Scene of his daily and important Labours, you may see by turning to *Luke xiii. 32.*

As you are not alone, then, in your Discouragements, neither ought you to be in your Resolutions, to go on as these your great Predecessors have done. And to encourage you the more to this, remember,

Secondly, That whatever your desponding Thoughts may suggest to you under present Discouragements, 'tis not a *hopeless* and impossible Attempt in which you are engag'd. Nor are you thus to understand the Words of the faithful Servant of God in my Text. Remember he had received the utmost Assurance, *that God would be glorified in him.* And if you fear to apply such a Promise as this to yourselves, in the same emphatical Sense of the Words, remember yet, that how little Success soever there may be, the very Attempt is for the Honour of God; while in Ages of the greatest Declension and Apostacy, there are those who dare to declare themselves on the Side of Religion and Vir-

tue.

28 *A Sermon to the Societies*

But this is not all I would say here; I would put you in mind, there have been Effects, very great, and very encouraging, of your zealous Endeavours.

You set out happily at the Beginning; you met with Support and Countenance beyond your Expectation; and the Success also, for a while, was equal to your Hopes, it may be above them. Your Example was follow'd by other Cities, and other Kingdoms; and, as in the Beginning of Christianity, *a Nation was born in a Day*: Now Societies arose ever where at once; and at once encouraged and strengthen'd each other.

And if you had your Intervals of Discouragement, you had the Returns of Countenance also; and where most you desir'd and wanted it, the supreme and subordinate Magistrates thought it became them to add Weight, or to add Life to your Endeavours. And even some, who had the Weakness to break the Laws themselves, were so far convinc'd that you were engag'd in a Cause that was perfectly right, as to assist you, by their Authority or their Purse, to rescue others from the Consequences of Vices which themselves, perhaps, felt and regretted; though they had not the Resolution and the Virtue to abandon them. And therefore you are not to wonder, if Efforts against [Nature, and] strongest Inclinations,

for Reformation of Manners. 29

inclinations, and even Habits of Vice, were of short Continuance; and that they, who had no fixt and inward Principle of Religion and Virtue, could not long prevail with themselves to act a Part so inconsistent and unnatural. And yet even in such Circumstances as these, 'tis possible to point out present and very considerable Effects.

I believe you will agree with me, that if there be any Number of Men where you would most despair of Success, they are those who man the Fleet of this Nation; and yet I shall take leave to put you in mind, if at least the Fact which I am going to mention happen'd within the Memory of any here present, that even these have been generally and remarkably oblig'd to submit to the Sacredness and Authority of the Law, when executed with Steadiness, Resolution and Vigor.

I may mistake in some Circumstances of Things which were done so long ago; but I promise to relate them with utmost Faithfulness to the Best of my Memory. I was near the Scene at the very Time; and the Remembrance of it has been ever affecting to me. A Person of a tender Spirit, and a deep Sense of Religion, had been elected Magistrate of a Corporation in the Neighbourhood of which our Fleets
gene-

30 *A Sermon to the Societies*

generally lie waiting for Orders, or a Wind. Upon the Moment that he was chosen into such a Post, and where he should often have to do with such a Generation of Men, and sometimes with the greatest amongst them, he began to consider the Duties of his Office, and the Danger of discharging them; his Obligations on the one hand, and his Weakness, and want of Courage or Conduct, on the other. The Thought overwhelm'd his Mind, and the Distress of his Spirit drove him to Distraction. Some Days were past in this Conflict, till he came at length to the noble Resolution, that whatever were the Danger, he was determin'd to act the Dictates of his Conscience. He applied himself to a Member of your Societies in a neighbouring City; and he to you for Advice and Assistance: And I am witness, in some measure, with how much Readiness and Zeal you gave it: And the Success was such as the Heart of a good Man, and a religious Magistrate, would wish. Whatever was done aboard, no open Excesses were committed ashore; no Oaths were heard, no Drunkenness or Lewdness was seen; or if seen, was immediately and certainly expos'd or chastis'd. And even none among the chief Commanders that were entertain'd, as usual, at his House, could think

for Reformation of Manners. 31

think it a Point of Honour, either to affront or grieve a Person, that had given such Evidence that it was Conscience alone, and a Sense of the most sacred Engagements, that had mov'd him to act with such an uncommon Zeal in the Cause of Virtue, or at least, could think it prudent to make the Trial, how far such a Magistrate would make use of the Power with which the Laws of the Land had arm'd him.

A few such Instances as these ought to encourage and support you, had you no other; but you have had all along since your first appearing, and continue to this Hour to have daily Evidences, that your Labour neither is, nor has ever been in vain. A hundred Thousand Offenders, and speaking in rigorous Propriety of Speech, actually prosecuted by you, is a Proof at once of your Zeal and Success. There have been, therefore, great and considerable Effects of your religious Endeavours.

Nor is this all I have to say here; he that acts under Divine Assurances, that he shall never be call'd to a fruitless Service, ought to believe what he may not see.

I would suggest to you, therefore,
Thirdly, That there may have been other, and even more important and desirable Effects, which it is not possible for
you

32 *A Sermon to the Societies*

you to know particularly, and which, yet, you may have the highest Reason to believe.

If Thousands have been convicted by you every Year, how many Thousands and ten Thousands more may have been deterr'd, or learn'd Wisdom, by the Rebuke of their Companions? And how far may the Restraints of Vice have reach'd, beyond the Punishment of it? One Nest of unclean Birds surpriz'd; one House of lewd and disorderly Practices suppress'd and broken up; how many simple and unwary Souls may it have rescu'd from the Snares into which they had otherwise fallen? And how many, therefore, may have reason to bless God for ever upon your Account? At least, 'tis probable, we had been in still more dreadful Circumstances of Profaneness and Immorality, had you never appear'd, and awaken'd a Spirit of Reformation amongst us.

Who knows also, or rather, who does not know, how far the Judgments we have deserv'd for our Excesses, and Impiety, may have been allay'd, or diverted by the very arising of such Societies. And as it can hardly be shewn, that God ever proceeded to the last Severity with any People, under any Appearances of Repentance, and visible Attempts for Reformation; and the contrary may be observ'd in the Case of

Nineveh,

for Reformation of Manners. 33

Nineveh, and of *Israel*, when even an *Abab* humbled himself. It may be, he will never proceed to such Severity even with this sinful Nation, till you, Gentlemen, grow weary of your Work, and there shall be none left that reproveth in the Gate. But in case it should be otherwise, and all your generous Endeavours on the Behalf of others should be really in vain; yet,

Fourthly, I have one Thing still in Reserve, and 'tis the last and the principal Thing in my Text, and which alone may be sufficient to support you; you *will deliver your own Souls*. And is this all? No; you *will be glorious in the Eyes of your God*; he will approve your Conduct, and for ever reward it. This is agreed by all to be the Meaning of these Words, *Then I said, I have labour'd in vain, I have spent my Strength for nought, and in vain*; yet, surely, my Judgment is with the Lord, and my Work is with my God.

He has noted down in his Book, and recorded it in the Archives of Heaven, where shall be faithfully register'd, and found for ever in those holy Memorials, all the eminent and illustrious Acts of distinguish'd Zeal and Love to God, and the Cause of God, done by the least and latest of his Servants on Earth.

34 *A Sermon to the Societies*

For that such a Book there is kept in Heaven, or what shall be inconceivably more for the Honour and Advantage of his Saints than such a Thing could be in the Letter; the sure Word, that testifies concerning those Things, will not suffer us to doubt. Even every *Word*, that holy Zeal has urg'd us to speak in the Behalf of God; every Thought of the Mind, how best we might express the Desires of that sacred Affection which glows in our Breasts; and how much more, every proper, every seasonable, every wise and vigorous Attempt on the Side of God, and in the Cause of Virtue, shall be written down in that Book, and never be eras'd. Read the Words often, for your Encouragement, as you find them in the very Close of the Books of the *Old Testament*. 'Tis one of the last Things the God of *Israel* had to say to his People of old, and leave it with them for Ages: *Mal. iii. 16, 17. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearken'd and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him; for those that feared the Lord, and that thought on his Name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in THAT DAY when I make up my JEWELS. Then shall ye return, and discern between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.*

And

for Reformation of Manners. 35

And this, he that knows our Frame, has judg'd so proper a Consideration to animate us to exert our selves to the utmost, that he has thought fit to put us in mind of it again in the Close of the *New Testament* also. Therefore you read the Words of *John* in *Rev. xx. 12.* *I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God, and the Books were open'd, and the Dead were judged out of those Things, which were written in these Books.* And, how comfortable, how joyful will it be to us, to find your Actions recorded there, and produc'd not against you, but for you, in that great, that remarkable, that distinguishing and decisive Day!

And if we could possibly doubt of such a Thing after such witness, he has given us already Assurance of it, a kind of Pledge and Earnest in what he has commanded to be done on Earth. And therefore I shall conclude my Discourse with observing to you, that there is no other Work in which the Heart of Man has engag'd, or his Hands have labour'd, which has been so visibly, so remarkably, and even so gloriously rewarded in the Eyes of the World it self, and the Records of which have been so long, and so carefully preserv'd in everlasting Testimony. *How pleasing to God* is the Conduct of those, who have dar'd to appear in his Cause in the World, whatever were the Danger, or

36 A Sermon to the Societies

the Opposition of all the rest of the World?

There were but three Persons that ever liv'd in the World, of the Reward of whose Services on Earth, in another and superior State, God has given sensible, and as we are wont to call it, *ocular Demonstration*; and they were all expressly engag'd in the same Cause with you, the same Work of Reformation. *Enoch*, of whom you have heard that he was the first that was *translated*, in the Language of the Apostle, that he should not see Death, *Heb. xi. 5.* *Elijah*, the next that follow'd his Example, follow'd him also in like manner, drawn in a Chariot of Fire, and with Horses of Fire, and ascended, as it were, in Triumph to Heaven; while he that beheld it cried out, *My Father, my Father, the Chariot of Israel, and the Horsemen thereof!* alluding, probably, to the Host of the heavenly Angels, that accompanied and ascended together with him. And in proof of what he had seen returns back in the Spirit and Power of *Elijah*, *2 Kings ii. 12.*

And the *Third* is no other than the very Person, probably, who speaks in my Text; too great, and too glorious, to be mention'd together with the greatest and most faithful of the Servants of God, had he not

for Reformation of Manners. 37

not resolv'd to receive no Reward, and enter into the Glory in which he was not determin'd that all his faithful Servants should share with him.

This is he, to whom the God of *Israel* saith, *Thou art my Servant, in whom I will be glorified.* And who, when he was rejected, where he had reason to expect to be received with utmost Gratitude and Joy, supports himself in the View of the Reward of all his Labours, and saith in the Verse that followeth my Text, *Though Israel be not gathered yet shall I be glorious.* The Labours that had little or no Effect where it was first desired and attempted, had a most glorious Effect on all the rest of the World, and in comparison of which, the Recovery of one Nation to their God appeared to be little in the Eyes of him who sent him on so important an Errand. *It is a light Thing, saith he, that thou shouldst be my Servant, to raise up the Tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my Salvation to the End of the Earth;* as it follows a little after my Text.

And thus was the Promise of God fulfill'd, *Thou art my Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* Permit God then to choose his own Way, in which to glorify himself, and to reward his Servants.

And,

38 *A Sermon to the Societies*

And, what was the Reward? The very Effect of his Labours was also the Reward of them, and a Part of the Joy that was set before him; and will ever be so to a truly good Man, a Lover of God, and of the Souls of Men.

And this, perhaps, by comparison with what you read *John xii. 20—24.* was the very Thing that he intended, when he saith, *John xvii. 4. Father, I have glorified thee on the Earth, I have finished the Work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me!* And if more was intended, more also was granted, and he was heard in what he asked. His Sufferings were near their End, and all that was to follow was glorious. I might shew it in the Circumstances of his Death, and in those of his Resurrection; but it is only to my present Purpose to observe his glorious Ascension, in the same visible Manner, and after the same Example with *Enoch* and *Elijah*; for the Moment he had finish'd all the Work that he had on Earth, had promis'd the Holy Ghost, and given his last Instructions to his chosen Disciples, when he had done speaking, and while they were fixing their Eyes attentively upon him, a Cloud, the usual Token of the Divine Presence and Glory, received him out of their sight, *Acts i. 9.* And this the great Apostle thought worthy a peculiar Notice

for Reformation of Manners. 39

Notice, when he reckons up in order all the Wonders of the Doctrine of Jesus, *1 Tim. iii. ult.* And without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the Flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the World [*ἐν ᾧ ἡ ἐκκλησία*] received up in Glory, as well as INTO it.

This is the Distinction God has thought fit to make between his other Servants, and these Three, so very remarkable for their Zeal to recover Mankind to their God; and thus far was visible to Men. And yet here his Glory did but begin; the Eyes of the Apostles follow'd him up to Heaven, but the Eyes of the first Martyr, or Witness for Jesus, were strengthen'd to follow him into Heaven it self, *Acts vii. 55.* who being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right Hand of God, in a Posture, as it were, to receive him, where otherwise the Scripture generally represents him, as set down, and sat down for ever enthron'd in Glory. But what is this, you will say, to us? Let Jesus himself make the Answer, *Rev. iii. 21.* To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my Throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his Throne. After all our Conflicts with Sin, and Sinners, we shall receive the Crown,

40 *A Sermon to the Societies, &c.*

Crown, shall sit down on the same Throne, and have Communion with him in all his Glory for ever and ever. And again, to the Purpose of what we have said in the Entrance of this Head, *ver. 5. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white Raiment;* that is, in Robes of Glory; and *I will not blot out his Name out of the Book of Life;* but *I will confess his Name before my Father;* and *before his Angels.* Amen! even so be it! Lord Jesus!

The Reader is earnestly desir'd to Correct the following ERRATA, owing to the Absence of the Author.

PAGE 4. l. 14. for *said* r. *saith*. ib. l. 17. for *shall* r. *should*. p. 6. l. 16. for *unto* r. *into*. ib. l. 21. for *Israelites* r. *Israel*. p. 10. l. 29, 30. dele for *Reformation of Manners,* or the *Crotchets*. p. 14. l. 23. r. *happy*. p. 20. l. 27. for *our* r. *your*. p. 21. l. 6, 7. dele the *Crotchets*. p. 22. l. 18. put a Colon after *Persons*. p. 18. l. 13. for *Now* r. *New*. ib. l. 19. put a Colon after *wanted it*. ib. in the last Line, blot out *Nature and,* or the *Crotchets*. p. 30. l. 1. dele *for*. p. 32. l. 26. for *allay'd* r. *delay'd*. p. 33. put a Comma only after *Himself*. ib. Last l. but one, for *latest* r. *lowest*. p. 35. l. 12. for *to Us*. r. *to You*. ib. l. 28, 29. put a Comma only after *Testimony*, and r. in one continued Sentence, *how pleasing, &c.* p. 36. l. 2. dele the note of Interrogation. ib. l. 23. put a Comma only after *Him*, and r. *and*. p. 37. l. 2. for *the Glory* r. *no Glory*. p. 39. l. 25. for *sat* r. *set*.

